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ABSTRACT

In response to the critical need for nurses in New York City, the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), with support from two local unions and a foundation, initiated the Evening/Weekend Program designed for working adult nursing students in fall, 1989. While the 3-year, part-time program was open to any qualified BMCC student, a special recruitment and academic support plan was developed with the unions. The following support mechanisms, combining existing college-wide resources with new initiatives developed specifically for the program, were provided: (1) a mandatory basic skills assessment and placement program; (2) a free Pre-Freshman Immersion Program, offering remediation to those students who require it (70% of BMCC's student body) prior to regular enrollment; (3) special group orientations, assessment testing sessions, admissions appointments, and registration dates for union members; (4) a full-time college counselor available evenings and Saturdays for Nursing students; (5) union counselors available evenings and Saturdays for union members; (6) non-credit preparatory courses for chemistry, anatomy, and physiology, supplemented by an innovative science tutoring program; (7) peer tutoring in the Nursing Tutorial Lab; (8) basic skills classes for students offered on-site at union headquarters; and (8) monthly meetings between BMCC and union administrative staff to review the progress of the program. Using the union-based model, BMCC also developed a hospital-based program in cooperation with Harlem Hospital, targeting local residents, as well as hospital employees. (MAB)

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EXPANDING RESOURCES FOR WORKING ADULTS: A COLLEGE/COMMUNITY/HOSPITAL COLLABORATION

presented by

Stephen M. Curtis, Acting President
Betty West, Coordinator, Evening/Weekend Nursing Program
at Harlem Hospital

The Minority Student Today Conference
San Antonio, Texas
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INTRODUCTION
(Dr. Curtis)

Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Curtis. I am Acting President of Borough of Manhattan Community College, though it is in my permanent role, Dean of Academic Affairs, that I have been involved with the Nursing project that is today's topic. My colleague is Professor Betty West, a member of our Nursing faculty and also Coordinator of the Evening/Weekend Nursing Program at Harlem Hospital. In the time allotted today we'd like to share with you some observations, data and other information concerning our Evening/Weekend Nursing Program, with particular emphasis on the collaborative nature of the program. While this program is a relatively young one at the College, it is a very closely monitored curriculum at our institution, and the results--in terms of student success--have thus far been very encouraging.

Our plan for this session is to describe the planning process that led to the implementation of the program, look at the specific components of the program that we believe affect retention and student success, and finally discuss how our experience with this program has impacted other collaborative initiatives within the College. We'll be happy to take questions at the close of our remarks.

Institutional Profile. As a context for our discussion, let me tell you a little bit about our institution. Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), is a campus of The City University of New York (CUNY). It is the largest of The City University community colleges and the only one situated in Manhattan. We are an open admissions institution, and we attract almost 16,000 students in credit programs and 8,000 students in non-credit programs each semester.

The student population at BMCC reflects the diversity of New York City that we serve. In addition to serving students from all five New York City boroughs, we have a foreign student population which currently represents 97 countries. In terms of race and ethnicity, 55% of our student body is Black, 29% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 9% Caucasian and other ethnic groups. Almost two-thirds of our students are women.

In terms of academic preparation, many of our students come to the College lacking a strong academic background. Twenty percent (20%) of entering freshmen hold a GED rather than a high school diploma, and only 38% of entering freshmen have achieved a high school average of 70 or better. As part of The City University of New York, our College participates in a mandatory Freshman Skills Assessment Program. All entering students are assessed in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. The results of those assessments indicate that 70% of our students are placed into one or more remedial classes, and our faculty have developed well-defined

sequences of courses in reading, writing, mathematics and English as a Second Language.

In terms of programs of study, our institution offers 18 curricula leading to the associate degree. Over half of our students enroll in business-related curricula (accounting, business management, computer information systems, office administration). The other two significant areas of enrollment are liberal arts and a number of health-related curricula--nursing, respiratory therapy, medical records, EMT/paramedic.

Nursing Programs. With this brief glance at our institution as a backdrop, I now want to turn my attention to the specific program at hand. Since our inception 27 years ago, the College has offered an associate degree program in Nursing. Our students graduate with an Associate in Applied Science degree and are qualified to sit for the State Board Examination, which leads to certification as a Registered Nurse. During most of those years of our existence the Nursing program remained strictly a day program, available in general only on a full-time basis. While many of the Pre-Nursing classes and general education courses could be taken on a part-time basis, at some point students had to commit to a fuller schedule as they entered the Clinical Nursing phase of the program. While discussions of a possible part-time and/or evening program took place from time to time, no serious effort to develop such a program took place.

That situation is in sharp contrast to today. Currently we offer three configurations of our Nursing program: the Day Program, still more or less geared to the traditional schedule; a campus-based Evening/Weekend Program, geared to the working adult; and the Harlem Hospital-based Evening/Weekend Program, also geared to the working adult--but geared as well to a particular segment of our community. I want to speak first to the development of our campus-based Evening/Weekend Program, then to the subsequent development of the hospital-based program.

Union-based Program. As you are undoubtedly aware, the 1980's saw an increasing shortage of nurses, in part because salaries were low. At the time our first evening program was developed, the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation reported 500 nursing vacancies in its 18 municipal hospitals. The actual enrollment in our own Day Nursing Program had remained steady; but the pool of pre-nursing students had declined dramatically. (This situation has turned around in equally dramatic fashion as salaries in the field have now improved.)

In 1988 two union locals approached The City University to indicate their support for a Nursing program that would meet the needs of working adults who were union members. The

unions, District Council 37, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO which represents nurses, school aides, clericals and others (130,000 City employees in all), and Local 1199, representing hospital workers, sought to give their membership--some of whom were already in the health field, others of whom were looking for a change in vocation--sought to give them the opportunity to pursue a Nursing degree while still working full-time. The University recognized the need to serve this population as well as the need to assist in addressing the nursing shortage in New York City. Within 18 months BMCC became the first unit within The City University of New York to offer an evening associate degree program in Nursing. One of our sister campuses, Medgar Evers College, has since instituted both a similar associate degree program and a complementary evening baccalaureate program in Nursing. Our program is fully articulated with Medgar Evers' baccalaureate program, a factor that is extremely important for our students.

From the onset, this new program was designed to be taken on a part-time basis. Unlike the day program, which was conceived as a traditional two-year curriculum, the evening program is designed to be completed in three years. Curriculum requirements are identical to the day program, but the schedule configuration, which is blocked programming throughout the three-year sequence, never allows for more than 11 credits in a term, and usually less.

I might add here that, because of the critical need for nurses in New York City, the University was successful in attracting foundation support in helping to implement our first Evening/Weekend Program. That support was available for three years; and subsequently the College has assumed full responsibility for the operating costs of the program.

As we approached the start of the new program in the Fall 1989 semester, we kept in mind the target population we sought to serve--working adults. While the evening program is open to any qualified BMCC student, we developed a special recruitment and academic support plan with the two unions, all the while utilizing campus services already in place. These support mechanisms combined existing College-wide resources with new initiatives developed specifically for this program. These mechanisms include:

1. A mandatory College-wide basic skills assessment program, the requirements of which must be completed before admission to the Nursing curriculum.

2. A free pre-freshman program, offering students who have remediation needs the opportunity to satisfy those requirements prior to regular college enrollment.

3. Special group orientations, assessment testing sessions, admissions appointments and registration dates for union members.

4. A full-time College counselor/advisor available evenings and Saturdays for Nursing students. The counselor tracks student progress in both Nursing and liberal arts courses, maintaining personal contact with students and instructors. For union members this counselor also serves as a liaison with union representatives.

5. Union counselors available evenings and Saturdays for union students. These counselors serve as liaisons with College staff.

6. Non-credit pre-chemistry and pre-anatomy and physiology courses, designed to prepare students for first semester chemistry and first semester A&P, historically the most difficult of the required Pre-Nursing courses. This is supplemented by an innovative science tutoring program, with a tutor attending class sessions to forge closer links to the tutoring that occurs outside the classroom.

7. Peer tutoring in the Nursing Tutorial Lab to reinforce knowledge of nursing concepts and prepare students for examinations. While any student may utilize the tutoring, students who fail their first examination in a nursing course are required to attend this lab.

8. Basic skills classes for union students requiring remediation, offered on site at union headquarters by the College.

9. Monthly meetings between College and union administrative staff to review the progress of the program and its students.

Professor West will shortly describe to you the specifics of the Harlem Hospital program, and you will hear--in greater detail--many similarities to what I have just cited. We have, in fact, adapted the union-based program to new surroundings at Harlem Hospital.

The union-based program has grown from 22 students in the Fall of 1989 to 600 (including both Nursing and Pre-Nursing) students this Fall. Our first graduating class in the Evening/Weekend Program marched down the aisle this past June. The retention rate in this program is one of the highest in the College--in great part because of the collaborative nature of the program. Which brings me to

Harlem Hospital and our second--and newer--Evening/Weekend Program.

Hospital-based Program. The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) is the largest municipal hospital system in the United States. Its facilities are located in all five boroughs of New York City. About one and one half years ago, a Senior Vice President for HHC entered into discussions with the central office of the University about ways in which the pool of nurses in the City could be expanded. With the nursing shortage which our City has experienced, there has been an increased reliance in recent years on foreign-trained nurses, and Harlem Hospital itself serves as a good example--more than 50 percent of its nurses are foreign-trained. HHC sought to respond to the overall nursing shortage in the City by looking to our own communities to recruit and educate nurses.

The Corporation proposed that three of its facilities--one each in Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx--serve as sites for University-based degree programs. I would add here that, with the fiscal constraints that both New York City and State have experienced--constraints that are familiar to almost every urban setting--only one of these programs has actually been implemented, and that is ours, located at Harlem Hospital.

Coincidental with the City's interest in expanding opportunities in nursing education, both Harlem Hospital in particular and the Harlem community in general were also interested in locating a degree program at the hospital. The hospital at first envisioned a revival of its Harlem Hospital School of Nursing, which had operated on its premises some years before. However, both HHC and the City University agreed that it was simpler and more cost effective to offer an existing degree program on site than it was to restart--and reaccredit--a hospital-managed program from scratch.

Our program at Harlem Hospital is modeled on our successful union-based program. Again, the course schedules are blocked, and courses must be taken on a part-time basis over three years. Again, there is a targeted student population--in this instance, Harlem Hospital employees and residents of the Harlem community. Professor West will expand on this momentarily. Again, there are collaborative entities working toward common goals--HHC (which funds the program in its entirety); the City (which supplied funding for capital purchases); the Hospital (which provides both facilities and staff); the community (which interacts with the program through a hospital advisory board and through a School of Nursing alumni group); the University (which serves as liaison between BMCC and the City); and the College (which bears full responsibility for operating the program). The principal difference between the two Evening/Weekend programs

is the fact that virtually the entire Harlem program and its support services are offered on site at the hospital. (The chief exception is the sequence of science courses, since they require the use of College laboratories.) Betty will also speak to this point in her remarks.

Academic Support Services. The last observation I would make deals with those programs and services already in place for all of our students--and therefore for these nursing students as well. Though most of their time is spent on site at Harlem Hospital, these are indeed BMCC students, and they have full access to any of our campus-based services.

I indicated earlier that our College participates in a mandatory Freshman Skills Assessment Program. All entering students are assessed in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. And I indicated that 70% of our students are subsequently placed into one or more remedial classes. Our faculty are committed to the concept of student access to and progress through our degree programs, and they have initiated a number of steps to address the need for strong academic skills preparation. These steps include: the establishment of basic skills prerequisites for all content courses; an extensive pre-freshman basic skills program, which offers free basic skills classes to entering freshmen and serves 1600 students annually; and a centralized tutoring program, supplemented by several tutoring efforts offered through departmental laboratories.

Basic Skills Prerequisites. Every course offered in our college has defined reading, writing and (when appropriate) mathematics levels that faculty have established as the minimum required for student success in the course. (EXAMPLE) The basic skills levels are defined in terms of the Freshman Skills Assessment Program I cited earlier. Our computerized advisement/registration system reads the student's assessment scores and either permits or prohibits registration in a given course, depending upon whether the student meets the basic skills prerequisites for that course. That is true for Nursing courses, Science, Math and the like. In addition to being programed into the computer, these prerequisites are also published in a Basic Skills Guide.

Pre-Freshman Program. Our college supports an extensive program--primarily in the summer, but on a smaller scale in the January intersession as well--which offers freshmen an opportunity to take some of their required remedial classes free, in advance of their actual enrollment in the College. The program is offered in an intensive 6-week summer session, and its components include: small class size (15); a teaching assistant (tutor) in every class; a counseling/ orientation component that is integrated with instruction; a theme approach across the curriculum; student incentives, including books, snacks and transportation; and a sense of

community that is otherwise difficult to foster in a commuter college like ours.

Our Pre-Freshman Summer Program has grown from 70 students in 1987 to over 1400 this past summer. Over 95% of the participants complete the program; and our data shows that program participants are retained after three semesters at a 20% higher rate than non-participants. In addition, the overall retention rate within our institution is on the increase.

These are the kinds of support mechanisms already in place for all students at our college. We have been able to utilize some of these specifically for our Evening/Weekend Nursing students. At this point I'll turn to Betty West, who will share with you how the program has built on existing initiatives and has also developed new resources for our nursing students.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
(Professor West)

Target Population. The target population for our Nursing Program at Harlem Hospital consists of two groups: employees (in any capacity) of Harlem Hospital; and residents of the Harlem community. For hospital employees, the program serves as a career ladder, giving LPNs, nurses aides, clerks, etc. the opportunity to advance. For community residents the program also provides a chance to upgrade themselves. In both cases participants in the program have a sense of belonging and commitment, both to the hospital and to the community.

All prospective students are given the Freshman Skills Assessment Tests (FSAT). Based on the results of the FSAT, 43 students were admitted to the Spring 1992 class, with the remainder being advised to enter various basic skills programs (described below).

Orientation, Admission, Advisement. As much as possible, group sessions for prospective students are held on site at the hospital. At the initial orientation, the program coordinator, assisted by a College admissions counselor, program advisor and hospital liaison, outlines program requirements and admissions/registration procedures. Because so much of the program takes place off campus, every effort is made from the initial orientation onward to "link" students with the College and make them aware of both campus and hospital services as well as academic and non-academic (e.g., financial aid) policies.

Staffing/Program. Among the staff of the hospital-based program there are three who have key roles in terms of the program itself. The academic counselor plays an important role in orienting, advising and monitoring students. This counselor maintains evening and weekend hours equivalent to the students' schedule, so that he is available for questions or assistance. His office in the hospital is located near classroom sites.

In addition to normal orientation and advisement duties, this staff member monitors (along with the program coordinator) students' academic progress. The counselor maintains regular contact with all classroom instructors in order to intervene where problems arise. A common example is the need for additional tutoring, based on assessment early in the semester. This counselor has become one of the College's most effective participants in our "early warning" program; and his presence impacts positively on program retention.

A second important staff member is the tutorial lab supervisor. In establishing the Evening/Weekend Program at

the hospital, hospital staff were able to renovate an existing room, redesigning it to become a computerized tutorial laboratory. The lab supervisor, who has both computer and basic skills expertise, oversees a tutorial staff of 17. The lab accommodates two types of students: those prospective students who, with intensive tutoring, can retake the FSAT and subsequently be admitted to the Nursing Program; and current enrollees who need tutoring in their specific courses--most commonly science and mathematics.

Because of the extensive interest in the program to date (almost 500 students tested for 100 program slots) and because of the intense remedial needs of many of the prospective students, additional referrals have been made with regard to basic skills instruction:

1. Referrals to the Pre-Freshman Immersion Program, described earlier by President Curtis.

2. Referrals, for hospital employees who are members of District Council 37, to the union's education program.

3. Referrals to the Educational Opportunity Center, a State-funded agency also located in Harlem.

One other aspect of academic support has been the pre-chemistry and pre-anatomy and physiology workshops. Chemistry and A&P have historically been the most difficult of the pre-nursing courses and often serve as predictors of ultimate success in the program. In order to provide as solid a base as possible for students in the program, we offer (on a voluntary basis) 3-week workshops (in summer or January intersessions) in advance of actual enrollment in the respective courses. The philosophy here is not to teach a compressed 3-week chemistry course, for example, but rather to build those skills necessary to succeed in such a class: math skills; the ability to comprehend the more technical language of a science textbook; basic science concepts; and so on. This approach, combined with direct tutorial support once students are actually enrolled in the courses, has produced an increase in the percentage of students passing (compared to all other sections of the same courses).

The third important staff member is the hospital liaison who has been assigned to our program. Her duties include recruitment of students, assistance with hospital facilities, and liaison to hospital staff and services.

The importance of the collaboration with the hospital is reinforced through weekly meetings of college and hospital staff. At our weekly meetings we review student progress and also programmatic issues. The important factor here is the

coming together and sharing of ideas and data. It cements the relationship between the college and the hospital, helping us to act in concert.

One example of the fruits of these meetings is demonstrated in the area of personal counseling. We found that our students have a myriad of problems other than academic ones; and although, as coordinator, I work closely with the students, it became clear in our joint meetings that both college and hospital staff saw the need for additional personal counseling. As a result, we are now searching for a full-time counselor who can assist students in addressing social or emotional needs.

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Conclusion
(Dr. Curtis)

We have been extremely pleased with the success our students have enjoyed thus far in the Evening/Weekend Nursing Programs--both union-based and hospital-based; and the step that naturally follows for us is to find ways of adapting some or all of these approaches elsewhere in the College.

Impact. There are at least three elements of our Evening Nursing Program that we are adapting in other curricula. First--the academic advisor. (This kind of assistance is in addition to normal academic advisement, which is the contractual obligation of all full-time faculty.) We have found that having an advisor monitoring student progress has, as you might expect, headed off potential academic problems for some students. In addition, where a complaint might surface among students about a given class or teacher, we are able to hear about it and deal with it much earlier than is often the case. We have already attached a part-time counselor/advisor to another flourishing program, our Early Childhood Education program. In this instance the advisor not only advises and tracks students through the program, but also offers workshops in sharpening study skills. And we are hopeful that the hiring of such an advisor will reinforce a concomitant University and College effort: retaining and encouraging minority students to move into teaching. And we are about to introduce the same concept into our Business Management curriculum, the largest single program (about 4,000 students) on our campus.

A second element that we are utilizing is the tutor in the classroom. You've heard that that model, which originated in our Pre-Freshman Summer Program, has been utilized in our basic chemistry class, historically the most difficult of the pre-nursing courses for our students. For the last two years we have also been piloting that approach in selected high attrition classes, and in most paired and

blocked classes. The latter are geared toward entering freshmen, and the availability of a tutor--or teaching assistant--has been one factor that has led to a higher percentage of students passing, a lower percentage of withdrawal, and higher quality points in blocked classes than in regular offerings of the same courses.

The third element that we are adapting is the general approach to collaboration. This fall, for example, we have initiated another on-site program called "Return to Learning" for AT&T workers. While this is a much smaller program in scope than our Nursing program, we are emphasizing similar components: collaboration of lead staff from both institutions; a part-time academic advisor who tracks students on site and interacts with teaching faculty; on-site tutoring; and the offer of free enrollment in our pre-freshman program. This fall saw an initial enrollment of 40 students in three classes. So we're off and flying again.

These are three very specific ways in which we are translating the success we have enjoyed in the Evening Nursing Program to other courses and curricula. We know that it takes a combination of efforts that leads to student success. Some of it is common sense: if you can give a student more individual attention, the chance for success is enhanced considerably. What pleases me is that our faculty are willing to put the time and effort into new initiatives, and, as is the case with the Nursing program, it's the students who ultimately benefit. And it pleases all of us at the College that we can collaborate with public and private agencies in our community for the benefit of our community's residents.

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